

78th St. Community Gardens

Water conservation guidelines

One of the guiding principles for the 78th St. Site is:
Showcase and promote sustainable and commercial agricultural practices.

Water is a limited resource, in order to follow the site's guiding principles we have created water conservation guidelines for the 78th St. Community Garden plots. Water conservation is beneficial to the environment and your community garden neighbors. Conserving water means more water availability for everyone (plants, animals and people).

Participation in the gardens includes an agreement to follow the water conservation guidelines set below. Failure to meet the guidelines will result in a warning and if repeated termination of your plot without refund.

Watering methods

Acceptable watering methods:

Hose with nozzles/watering cans

- Dig a moat/trench in a circle around the plants
- Water each plant individually—close to the roots
- See below for more tips and ideas for watering with a hose

Soaker hoses/drip irrigation

- Can be used, but you need to be present while running the water. If you opt to leave the system on and then leave it may be turned off while gone by other gardeners or site staff.

High water use methods (unacceptable)

- Overhead sprinklers
- Flood irrigation in full rows

A rule of thumb when using this method is to make sure that the place where you started watering still has some water on it by the time the water gets to the far end of your row—if it does not then this is not a method that works for your type of soil.

Water conservation Tips and pointers

Preferable

- Squeeze soil in hand if it sticks together it does not need to be watered.
- Water in the morning or evening
- Know how much water each plant needs. For example beans typically need a lot of water, whereas tomatoes tend to need less
- Overwatering can cause just as much damage to the plants as underwatering
- Avoid row planting—plant in blocks or wide rows. This will create shade which in turn helps cut down on evaporation and weed growth
- Mulch—creates a barrier from evaporation and keeps
No woodchips or bark type materials in soil, it can deplete nitrogen.
- Check plants for moisture before watering. Look for clues such as curling leaves, a grayish color and permanent wilting, which indicate underwatering. (If the leaves turn yellow and drop, you could be overwatering.)
- Keep your plots weeded. Weeds steal moisture from desirable plants.
- Cut the top from gallon-size milk jugs, punch very small holes in the bottoms, and set them in the ground with only the neck showing above the surface. Use one jug near (or between) each large (tomato or squash) plant and fill it once or twice a week or more often if needed. When the plants start fruiting (fruits are the size of a quarter), add one or two teaspoons of a complete fertilizer, such as 5-10-10, to each jug once a week. You can use large cans in place of jugs.
- Do not stand in the garden and spray the plants lightly every day. This is the worst possible way to water. When you water, water thoroughly to encourage roots to seek water and nutrients deep in the soil. With an extensive, deep root system, plants are better able to withstand dry periods. When watering, soak the soil to a depth of at least 6 to 8 inches. A thorough soaking every 7-10 days on heavy clay soils is a good general guide for irrigating vegetables.
- Vegetables like moisture, but overwatering is harmful. Over watering not only wastes water, it also prevents the roots from getting air. If your plants look wilted on a hot summer afternoon, that's normal. They will usually perk up overnight. If plants are wilted in the morning, don't wait -- water.

